

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the present amendment and following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7, 9-12, and 14-27 are pending. Claims 1, 4, and 20 have been presently amended. Claim 27 has been added. No new matter was added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 4 was objected to as being a duplicate of Claim 1. Claims 1-2, 4-7, 11, 14-15, 17-20, and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takekuma (U.S. Pat. No. 6,377,329) in view of Kirkpatrick et al, (U.S. Pat. No. 6,238,161, herein "Kirkpatrick"), and Olbrich et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,083,364, herein "Olbrich"). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takekuma in view of Kirkpatrick and Olbrich and in further view of Masayki et al (JP 10-012528, herein "Masayki"), wherein a machine translation was used. Claims 9-10 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takekuma in view of Kirkpatrick and Olbrich and in further view of Cakmakci (U.S. Pat. No. 4,836,968). Claims 12, 16, and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takekuma in view of Kirkpatrick and Olbrich and in further view of Slocum et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,733,024, herein "Slocum").

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the courtesy of Examiner Ford to interview this application with Applicants' representative on March 17, 2011. During which time, the issues in the outstanding Office Action were discusses as substantially summarized below.

During the interview, it was pointed out that the Examiner cites Kirkpatrick and Olbrich with regard to the utility lines. Kirkpatrick and Olbrich, however, neither disclose nor suggest separating the utility lines into two types of a liquid-related line and an electric system-related line. By separating the utility lines into the liquid-related line and the electric system-related line as in the present application, arrival of a liquid at the second connection

portion can be prevented even if the liquid leaks from the first connection portion. When the process block is freely attachable/detachable, the liquid-related utility line is frequently attached and detached at the first connection portion between the process block and the transfer block. As a result, it becomes highly possible that the liquid leaks from the first connection portion.

In Olbrich, the attachment of the utilities (fluid or electrical) all occur via coupling plates 10 and 10' whose utility connections are directly attached via plate 10' to the process block receiving the utilities.

Therefore, Olbrich neither discloses nor suggests

- a first connection portion connecting the process-block-side connection end of the first utility line to the transfer-block-side connection end of the first utility line,

- a second connection portion connecting the process-block-side connection end of the second utility line to the transfer-block-side connection end of the second utility line,

- said first connection portion only coupling fluids,

- said second connection portion only coupling electrical data and power,

and

- the first connection portion attached to the process block via a first attachment separate from and not directly connected to a second attachment attaching the second connection portion to the process block.

For all or any of the reasons discussed above, Claims 1-7, 9-12, and 14-26 are non-obvious and should be passed to allowance.


Finally, new method Claim 27 sets forth features in the specification on pages 20 and 21. This method claim recites features not disclosed or suggested in the art because of the fixed and customized utility attachments.

Hence, Claim 27 should also be allowed.

Conclusion: No further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-7, 9-12, and 14-27 is earnestly solicited.

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